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The Lord's Prayer

Frederick M. Lynk

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The Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

By

Frederick M. Lynk, S. V. D.



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Contents

Preface—A Heavenly Fountain.....	7
The Noble Art of Prayer	11
Lord, Teach Us To Pray	17
Our Father, Who Art in Heaven	23
Hallowed Be Thy Name	29
Thy Kingdom Come	37
Thy Will Be done on Earth as It Is in Heaven	43
Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread	51
Forgive Us Our Trespases as We Forgive Them That Trespass Against Us....	59
And Lead Us Not into Temptation	65
But Deliver Us from Evil	73
Amen.	79

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Preface

A Heavenly Fountain

THE picture on the preceding page portrays in a striking manner the origin and meaning of the Lord's Prayer. Two angels descending from heaven, hold in their hands a large white tablet with the first words of the Our Father. In the middle of the tablet are the first two letters of the name of Christ in Greek and the alpha and omega, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Around the tablet are the symbols of the four evangelists and above it hovers the dove, the symbol of the Holy Ghost.

The lower part of the picture shows an ever-flowing fountain of pure water, from which all the pilgrims of earth drink at will. The pelican, which according to old legends opens her breast to feed her young ones with

her own blood, is a symbol of the Savior, who shed His blood for us and applies the fruit of His redemption to our souls through the channels of prayer and the sacraments.

It was the Holy Ghost that wrought the incarnation, that sent the second person of the Blessed Trinity into this vale of tears and sin. Christ, the light of the world, the beginning and the end of all things, taught the Apostles how to pray, and through written and oral tradition He taught us. The Our Father is like a never-ceasing well of lofty inspirations, of strength and consolation. The young and the old, the wise and the foolish, the learned and the unlettered, the weak and the strong, all are invited to slake their thirst at this heavenly fountain. To point to this fountain, to lead some of my fellow pilgrims, and especially the young, to its crystal waters, is the purpose of this book. These little sermons, or meditations, have been published in the "Christian Family" during the year 1914. Very little has been changed or added. It is

hoped that the pictures will be found appropriate and helpful. Five of them are by various artists and the series, illustrating the Our Father proper, by Paul Thumann. One Our Father for the salvation of his soul by every reader is the humble request of the author.





Praying Before the Crucifix

The Noble Art of Prayer

MY dear young friends:—Did you ever watch anyone pray? Pray with all the devotion and recollection possible? If so, you must have been impressed by the sight of it.

Many years ago I visited the great cathedral of St. Stephen in Vienna, Austria. In one of the side chapels is a very large crucifix. While I lingered in this chapel, a girl came in and knelt down at the foot of the crucifix and prayed for a long time. Her frame shook under some internal struggle it seemed. She finally threw her arms around the lower part of the crucifix and with a reverential kiss on the wounds in the feet of the Crucified left the chapel. There was a look of resignation on her features as she went out, which impressed me very much.

There were several shrines, places of pilgrimage, not far from my childhood home. I often visited them. One day I noticed an old

man, shabbily clothed, with tottering steps approach the altar on which the miraculous picture of Our Lady was exposed. The man murmured his prayers half-loud, laid his grey old head on the railing and now and then shyly looked up to the Virgin. It was a most impressive spectacle.

One day a few years ago I was all alone in one of the large churches in Chicago. A young woman, pale, thin, and with the marks of unshed tears in her eyes, came in and walked down the middle aisle close to the altar, and there threw herself on the floor, where she remained for a considerable length of time. When she arose, her face was flushed; there seemed to be an unwonted lustre in her eyes, peace and courage in her soul,—she had prayed.

Some time ago I gave the Forty Hours in a little country parish. At almost every exercise I saw a mother who had her little ones with her. There were three and sometimes even four of them. The smallest of the crowd

was allowed to stand or to sit during the services, but during the consecration, she, too, had to kneel, although her eyes could hardly peep over the pew. It was touching to see how this little child of scarcely three years, perhaps less, looked up to her mother and with her chubby fingers tried to imitate her, making the Sign of the Cross and striking her innocent breast.

My own dear mother has long been laid to rest in the graveyard, but up to this day I most frequently picture her to my mind with that transfigured look which always appeared on her face when she prayed.

Now, I ask you, what is it that impresses us so much when we see others engaged in fervent prayer? Why does a feeling of awe and reverence come over our souls? Because in prayer the human soul communes with the Divine, the child of earth speaks to its Creator, the lowly beggar to the wealthiest of monarchs. A heart that hungers and thirsts for what is truly noble and beautiful and true,

drinks from the fountainhead of all truth and beauty and goodness, God. When praying, the spirit of man dwells in the presence of the Almighty, adoring, praising, and imploring His infinite majesty, and hence, a reflection of God's own light and peace falls awe-inspiring on the face of him who prays.

Prayer is like a blossom, swelling with the promise of fruit. Prayer is the most important factor in man's life. Without prayer there is no virtue, no strength, no life in the soul. Prayer is like the sun, which wakes the hidden power of life in the seed, that has been buried in the earth; it makes it sprout and grow, it opens its cup and gives it fragrance and beauty and strength.

If the sap does not ascend into the bark of the tree in springtime, that tree will die in the burning heat of summer. If the sap of prayer does not rise in the young tree of a human being, its spiritual growth and development is made impossible.

Prayer has a wonderful power over God's heart. No prayer is ever said in vain. It is the deepest expression of our dependence on God. It is our greatest help and comfort in the struggles and sufferings of life. Prayer is that noble art which we all must learn, if we wish to reach our heavenly destination. Let us try to learn it early by constant practice. Let us wield it as a holy weapon in our battles with the enemies of our soul; let us use it as the surest means to gain the Master's favor, let us never cease to pray, for prayer is the golden chain that binds us to our God and Creator. Amen.





Christ Teaches His Apostles the Our Father

Lord, Teach Us To Pray

MY dear young friends:—It probably was shortly after the feast of the tabernacles, when our Lord still lingered near Jerusalem, that one of His disciples asked Him about the great art of prayer. According to tradition it was on the peaceful heights of Mount Olivet, where the Master often prayed, that this instruction was given. Perhaps He had prayed longer than usual and when He reappeared among His followers, the divine light of His countenance inspired them with awe and filled them with a desire to learn from Him, their Master and model, how to pray like Him. St. Luke (11,1) with the charming simplicity that is common to all the evangelists, tells us how it happened in the following words: And it came to pass, that as He was in a certain place praying, when He ceased, one of His disciples said to Him: Lord,

teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And He said to them: When you pray, say: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. Amen.

A modern painter has represented this beautiful scene in a picture: In the background is the temple and the city of Jerusalem. In the centre is Jesus coming down the mountain side, full of majesty and mildness. His disciples surround Him, some standing, others kneeling, but all looking up to their Master with anxious faces. St. John has seized His right hand and asks in the name of the others: Lord, teach us to pray. At the foot of the mountain is a well and two deer; one eagerly drinks from the clear waters, the other looks up to the Savior, symbolizing the souls of the tired pilgrims of earth.

Prayer is one of the chief acts of worship. To organize prayer means to organize religion. Christ, being the founder of our religion, could not afford to leave us in the dark as to how we should pray. But He does not only give a definite formula of prayer, He also teaches us what qualities our prayer must have and adds some powerful motives why we should pray.

First of all we must pray in the spirit of faith. "When you are praying," He says (Math. 6, 7), "speak not much, as the heathens. For they think that in their much speaking they may be heard. Be you not therefore like them, for your Father knoweth what is needful for you before you ask Him." We cannot dispose God, but must dispose ourselves for the reception of His favors by prayer, which is at once the acknowledgment of our own poverty and unworthiness and a profession of God's power and goodness. The second quality of our prayer is confidence. God is our friend, (Luke 11, 5) nay, our fa-

ther, (Luke 11, 2 and 11, 11) so we may go to Him with perfect confidence in all things. The third quality our prayer should have is perseverance. We must act like the friend mentioned in the same chapter, (11, 5-9): "Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight and shall say to him: Friend, lend me three loaves, because a friend of mine is come off his journey to me, and I have not what to set before him, and he from within should answer and say: Trouble me not, the door is now shut and my children are with me in bed. I cannot rise and give thee. Yet, if he shall continue knocking, I say to you, although he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth." And He adds: "And I say to you: Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

Also the most powerful motives to be zealous in prayer, aside from His own example, are contained in His instruction. The first motive is its necessity. The very words and also the parables by which He illustrates them, show that this formula comprises everything we need, from the highest, heaven itself, down to the little daily wants of our bodies. God owes us nothing except through prayer. We need God's graces and favors, we cannot get them without prayer, consequently we must pray for them. The second motive is the efficacy of prayer. He has solemnly pledged His word (Luke 11, 9). Nothing but our own welfare and God's honor limit this efficacy. The power of prayer is as great as God's mercy and goodness.

We must pray because our Lord recommends and commands it. We must pray because prayer is the great means of our eternal salvation. Let us be thankful to our Divine Master that He has not only told us that we must pray, but also how and for what

we should pray. Let prayer play an important part in our lives. He who prays right, lives right. Amen.





A Boy Saying His Morning Prayer

Our Father, Who Art in Heaven

MY dear young friends:—The Lord's Prayer is the best of all prayers: it is short, simple, and full of meaning. It is a real world prayer, in which generation after generation of pilgrims on the thorny path to heaven find strength and consolation. It is fittingly said in the family home and the house of God, in private and public necessities. It is intelligible to the mind of a child and can never be fully understood by the greatest scholar. Now, every good prayer begins with an address of him to whom we wish to pray, then follow the petitions or praises or thanksgivings, as the case may be. The Lord's Prayer has the sweetest and the simplest address imaginable: Our Father, who art in heaven. Every word is significant. Let us consider them:

First of all, we are not only allowed but admonished by our Lord to address God as

father. He might have commanded us to say "Lord," or "Creator," or any other word that denotes God's majesty and supremacy over all things, but purposely He chose this name, father, to fill our hearts with childlike confidence. Of all relationships in which we stand toward God, His fatherhood is the one we cherish most. It does not diminish our reverence and respect, for we are all the time conscious of His incomprehensible greatness, His unfathomable wisdom, but we feel encouraged to approach Him and offer our petitions with confidence by being permitted to call Him father. Life is often hard and almost unbearable. Hopes are shattered and friends forsake us. Gloomy despair tries to unnerve our soul. In such hours of grief it is a relief to turn to God Almighty and remember that He wishes to be called upon by us, because He is our father. God's laws are not those of a tyrant, of a great taskmaster, but those of a kind and wise father.



"Our Father, Who Art in Heaven"

In the second place, our Lord does not teach us to say "my" Father, but "our" Father. He wants to inculcate a lesson. We are to consider and treat each other as members of one large family. God is the common father of all, of rich and poor alike. Before Him all men are equal. He is not partial, but dispenses to all His children the gifts of His divine goodness. We are to imitate Him and cherish for all a feeling of brotherly love and forbearance.

Lastly, by adding the words, "who art in heaven," we are reminded of the dwelling place of God, heaven, which is also our destination after this life is ended. To think of heaven, and in this heaven of a kind father who watches over us day and night, has or ought to have a cheering effect on our souls. It should keep us from all that is likely to make us unworthy of this holy and happy place. It should strengthen us when our feet begin to get weary, it should help us bear patiently the hardships of the road.

We have a father in heaven; this thought ought to bring about in our souls the right disposition, the right mood, when we kneel down to pray. These words cannot fail to impress us if we say them slowly and devoutly. Just try it.

Say the Our Father in the morning when you rise. Don't you think it will make you more thoughtful, more considerate, more patient, more kind and friendly in your dealings with your brothers and sisters, your parents and friends, and all with whom you come in contact during the day? Say it during the day and renew the good resolutions which you made in the morning, to do everything that your Father in heaven expects of you, as His children. Say it at night before you retire and ask yourself again: Did I behave as a child of God today? Or was I mean and unkind, impatient and careless? You see what great power there is in these few words, with which according to our Savior's precept we begin His prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven. Amen.



The Boy Jesus in the Temple

Hallowed Be Thy Name

MY dear young friends:—Being a priest, I often read the Scriptures, the New and also the Old Testament, and there in the second book of Moses, called Exodus, chapter 20, I find this: “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain.” This is the second commandment of God. It implies, that we must avoid the vain, i. e., the unnecessary use of the name of God or Jesus or any other holy name, and also that we must honor His name by pronouncing it reverently, by glorifying Him in every way possible. The first three of the ten commandments refer in a particular manner to the honor which we owe God. The Jews of old revered the name of God so much that they would never pronounce it, but when-

ever the word occurred they substituted another.

It is a familiar spectacle for all of you on Sunday morning to see people coming from all directions, in festive garments, and, let us assume, with festive hearts and festive faces to church. Why is it that all good Christians flock to the temple of God on Sundays? For the same reason that our Lord, when He was only a boy of twelve years, went to Jerusalem and stayed in the temple after His parents had left. He had to be "about His father's business," as He told His mother. We, too, want to be about our father's business. We, too, go to the house of God, the church, to pay homage to the hidden God of the tabernacle, to sing His praise, to hear His word preached to us, to receive Him and commune with Him in devout prayers. We pronounce His holy name, we fortify our souls by the thought of Him and the eternal truths He came down into this world to proclaim, we come to pray: Hallowed be Thy name.

But not only on Sundays must we hallow and honor God's holy name, no, every day of our lives. And yet how many people are there, young people, too, who have acquired the habit of using God's name in vain, of swearing and cursing. With one breath they say the Our Father and pray that God's name be hallowed, and with the next breath they contradict their prayer, they abuse this very name. There are boys who think it manly to swear and curse in the most horrid manner, who pronounce the name of Jesus Christ every time they become excited or enraged: there are even girls and women that rival boys and men in their vulgar and offensive way of talking.

Thousands of Catholic men and boys have banded together in the Holy Name Societies to check the wave of vile and filthy and blasphemous speaking, but the evil continues and even seems to be on the increase. And God, the All-holy, bears it all. He dwells immutable in the mansions of His eternity, but every

curse, every blasphemy, from the beginning of the world, is recorded in the books of the Judge. He can abide His time. At the moment when it pleases His divine majesty, He will send His messenger, Death, to put an end to the life of those that defiled and abused their tongues, to cut them off like a reaper, who with his scythe mows down the flowers and grasses of the meadow. And then He has all the long years of eternity to punish those who did not honor His holy name, but dishonored and abused it. For "the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain." He will punish those that swore lightly or falsely. Perjury is an awful sin, which God often punishes by sudden death.

Hallowed be Thy name. Let that prayer often be on your lips and constantly in your hearts. Every good child is hurt and grieved when his father's honor is attacked, his name besmirched, and rises to defend it. God is our father from eternity to eternity and if we wish to be His faithful children, we must pray



Moses, the great Law Giver

and work for His glory and honor. We must speak of God to those that know Him not, we must help to beautify the house of God and increase the solemnity and pomp of His worship, we must study His divine goodness and power revealed in nature, in the ruling of the world, in the souls of men.

We must pray that the number of good priests may increase in our land, because there are thousands who do not know the sweet message of the holy name, that missionaries be sent to all the vast regions where heathenism is still rampant with all its horrors of physical and moral degradation. We should check and admonish those with whom we come in contact and who may be given to the foul habit of using God's and Christ's holy name in vain and do all in our power to promote the honor and glory of our heavenly Father.

A number of years ago a good man in the city of Bonn, Germany, was suffering from an ulcer on his tongue. The doctors informed

him that his life could be saved by an operation, but that henceforth he would be mute. Immediately before the operation he was asked whether he had any last message to convey. The good man shook his head and then said slowly and solemnly: "Praised be Jesus Christ." These were the last words he spoke in this world, but we may be sure that on entering the next our Lord gave him a glorious welcome and restored his tongue and allowed him to sing in the choir of the angels for all eternity. Amen.





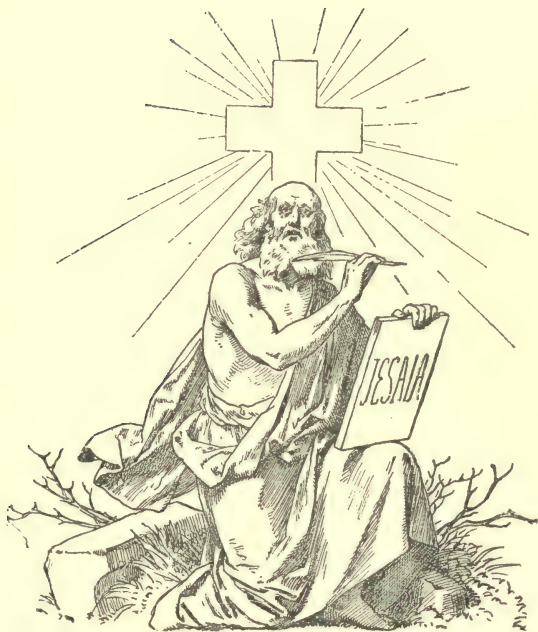


"Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven"

Thy Kingdom Come

MY dear young friends:—The kingdom of God, for whose coming we pray in the second petition of the Our Father, is not that supreme sovereignty which God exercises over all things created, but rather that kingdom whose realization depends largely on the free will of man. It is a threefold kingdom, the reign of God's grace in the souls of men, the reign of the Church of Christ in the nations of the earth, and the reign of the elect with God in heaven. There is a most intimate connection between these three kingdoms. The reign of grace is established in our souls through the Sacrament of Baptism and the infusion of the divine virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity, fostered and strengthened by the frequent and devout reception of the other Sacraments, by prayer and good works.

Anyone dying in the grace of God cannot fall a prey to Satan, but has the pledge of eternal life. To impart to our souls this grace and to provide us with the means to preserve it and in case it should be lost, to regain it, Christ has commissioned His Church. Whoever wants to become a citizen of the kingdom of heaven must first become a citizen of Christ's kingdom on earth, the Church. The one leads to the other. Christ reigns in both. He also reigns in the soul that possesses sanctifying grace. In this petition we pray for the extension of the Church, that the countless pagans, unbelievers and heretics may become members of the true Church and thus enjoy the inestimable blessings which it imparts to all who are willing to receive them, especially a knowledge of our heavenly destination and grace to reach it. The more people become members of the true Church of Christ,—and there cannot be more than one—the more souls are saved and the more glorious is the triumph of the Lord.



Isaiah the Prophet

For thousands of years poor fallen mankind waited for the coming of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom, the Church. Isaias, the mighty seer of old, who yearned to see this reign of Christ, showed the Messiah in prophetic pictures from early infancy to the consummation of His passion, pictures so vivid and sublime that they have furnished artists with inspiration, and with the magic of their brush they have endeavored to portray the reign of peace which this Child was to bring into the world.

“The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the sheep shall lie down together, and a little child shall lead them.”

Peace and harmony are essential features of this kingdom of God. It is the will of God that all men should participate in them. Nothing is more gratifying to God than the fulfilment of this petition, “Thy kingdom come,” because nowhere is He more glorified than in the Church, in the sanctified soul of

the Christian, and in heaven. In this three-fold kingdom God really accomplishes the purpose of creation. He is served and loved and manifests Himself and the power of His grace in a most wonderful manner.

There is nothing more salutary and more necessary for us than the coming of this kingdom. What are we without the Church, without grace, without the hope of heaven? We cannot wish anything better for ourselves and others. Now let me ask you: Do you really appreciate the grace of God? Do you value its possession? Do you guard it faithfully? Do you often pray that God may preserve it in your soul? Or do you expose your most precious treasure to all kinds of danger?

What have you done in the past to promote the extension of God's kingdom on earth? Do you take an interest in the home and foreign missions? Do you contribute your mite to the ransom of poor heathen children? Do you join mission circles for the

purpose of gathering stamps, or sewing, etc. for the missions? Do you read missionary periodicals? Do you at least pray for the poor heathens, that God may send them missionaries and they may see the light of the faith? Do you give a good example to outsiders, or do you in your manners and actions, dress and amusements, show no difference from the worldliest of the worldly?

Do you often think of heaven and the crown that God has in store for you? Are you willing to make sacrifices for it? Nobody has a greater right to a glorious crown than he who has done his utmost to defend and extend the kingdom of God on earth. Amen.





Jesus in Gethsemane

Thy Will Be Done on Earth as It Is in Heaven

MY dear young friends:—God's will is supreme. He holds in His hands the destinies of all His creatures. But God is not a despot, whose commands are inspired by whims. He must by His very nature seek His own glory, but by giving Him the honor that is His due, His creatures find their own happiness and salvation. There is no opposition to God's will in heaven. There the angels stand ever ready to carry out every wish of the Almighty with swiftness and precision. In this petition of the Our Father we pray that men should be as willing as the angels of heaven to fulfil the will of God, which is ever holy and adorable. He shapes our life and directs its course with wisdom and kindness, although we, with our limited intelligence and our wayward impetuosity, do not always see it.

Our wishes are often contrary to the wishes of God. Like foolish children we sometimes ask for things which God as a wise Father will not grant us, and we often ask to be delivered from those things that are most calculated to benefit us. "God's ways are not ours."

A mother had an only child, a boy of five years, and, naturally, loved him very much. This boy fell sick and as the sickness grew worse from day to day the mother became almost insane with fright. A priest tried to console her and make her pray for submission and humbly say to God, to let the child live if it was His will. But, she cried, it **must** be His will. Against all expectation the child did not die, he lived and grew up and led a life of sin and shame, and before he was twenty years old he was an inveterate criminal who ended on the gallows. God has always some secret intentions in all that He does, only He does not always deign to manifest them to us. Some of them will not



Abraham's Sacrifice

be revealed until doom's day, but many of them we are allowed to see ourselves in our lifetime, although perhaps many years after the puzzling occurrence.

Abraham, who was chosen to preserve the belief in one God among the corrupted nations of the earth, he, the father of the Jewish race, who had been promised that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the heavens, one day was commanded by God to sacrifice his only son Isaac. Unhesitatingly he started out to comply with the desire of the Omnipotent. They arrived on the mountain which God had pointed out to him as the place of the sacrifice. The little boy was placed on the improvised altar, Abraham's knife flashed through the air, and—in the last moment an angel of the Lord stayed his raised hand and prevented him from killing the child.—Abraham's faith and loyalty had stood the test and his example is one of the grandest recorded in history.

Another famous example of the Old Testament is the story of Job, that wealthy oriental landowner, who in one hour received the news that all his flocks had been robbed by brigands, that all his children had been killed in the collapse of a house where they were feasting, who was covered with leprosy from head to foot, and sat on a heap of straw, miserable and despised by his wife and former friends. All he said was: "The Lord has given it, the Lord has taken it, His name be blessed."—To reward him for his submission, God restored to Job a hundredfold what he had lost.

But the most glorious example of submission to the holy will of God was given by the Savior in the garden of Gethsemane on the night of His passion. Being human He felt the repugnance we all have to suffering. He trembled, He shuddered and pleaded with His heavenly Father to pass the chalice of pain from him. Three times He prayed in agonizing fear, but He added to His petition:

“Not My will but Thine be done.” And the Father’s will was done. He sent an angel to strengthen the disconsolate soul of the Savior, but not an iota of the sufferings that were decreed for Him, was taken off.

St. Elizabeth of Hungary was very much attached to her youthful and noble-hearted consort and when he had to go to war, she accompanied him for several days and clung to him in desperate affection. A presentiment that she would never see him again overpowered her and only amid many sobs and violent tears, she finally tore herself away from him, but when a short time afterwards she heard that her beloved husband had died, she was resigned and at the sight of his earthly remains she prayed: “O Lord, Thou knowest that the presence of my husband would rejoice me more than all human delights, but since it has pleased Thee to take him from me, I submit to Thy holy will with my whole heart. If by giving up one hair of my head I could call him back to life I would not do so, unless it be Thy pleasure.”

The will of God manifests itself in many ways: in the ten commandments, in the precepts of the Church, in the voice of conscience, in the words of superiors and teachers, in good books, in the happenings of our lives.

God's providence arranges all things. He often uses very insignificant occurrences to reveal His holy will. There is a great deal of stubborn self-will in all men. We are ever tempted to do our will rather than the will of God, although we know by experience that many a time by following our wayward impulses we defeat our own efforts.

Eventually all things must turn out to the greater glory of God. His plans in the history of the world and of the Church and of our own lives are often incomprehensible and appear to us like the wrong side of a beautiful carpet: it is nothing but a mass of many-colored threads without design, but the day will come when we shall see the other side and marvel at its beauty and fall down and adore

the ever-benevolent will of God.—Let us pray that God's will be done in us and through us, in all things. Amen.





Jesus Feeding the Multitude in the Desert

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

MY dear young friends:—God is the giver of all good gifts, spiritual and temporal. Like a wise father He distributes them, not according to whim or foolish predilection, but according to His eternal wisdom.

There shall always be rich and poor. Wealth is often a doubtful blessing and poverty sometimes a blessing in disguise. Extreme opulence brings the danger of abuse, extreme poverty of discontent, violence, and despair. A certain middle station between the two is about the most desirable thing from a broad human standpoint. The money craze, which is so characteristic of the present age, but which at all times has played a mighty part in the history of mankind, brings with it the neglect of the higher aims of life, religion, true culture, art, charity. Christ

said, it was hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven, and chose for Himself the life of a poor artisan.

He did not teach the apostles and us to pray for wealth but only for our daily bread. That expression, however, is not to be taken in the literal sense, but covers everything we need to sustain our life in a decent human manner, such as food, clothing, dwelling. (Luke 14, 1). According to Luke 11, 11, 12. the Lord Himself counts boiled eggs and roasted fish, the usual fare of travelers in the Orient, as belonging to the "daily bread."

The "Our Father" was intended for all, rich and poor alike. The wording of each petition and particularly the fourth is significant: Give us this day our daily bread. We are allowed and requested to pray for such material things as food and clothing, and He has promised to hear us. Give "us" we must say, not give "me." There is a deep meaning in this. When a rich man prays "give us," and thinks of the many brethren in ab-



Booz Meeting Ruth

ject poverty and of his own plenty, will it not stir him to make his own petition come true? God often distributes His goods through human stewards. That "give us" is a constant admonition to the wealthy to give alms to those in need and also a perpetual admonition to the poor to avoid the foolish sin of envy.

How can Christians in truth and sincerity pray, Give "us" "our" daily bread, if their souls and their eyes are ablaze with the unholy fire of jealousy and envy? And yet how often is this the case, even in church.

When a new doctor settles in a place and soon gets a large practice, how often does his competitor try to malign and defame him! The two pass each other like two jealous roosters.

A girl finds a desirable life partner and forthwith all her "good" friends and their mothers congratulate her, but among themselves wag their tongues for weeks in futile attempts to convince themselves that the groom

is a good-for-nothing and she will fare evil with him, or that he must be a perfect fool, marrying such a sickly slip of a girl, or, and that is the most malicious of all, well, they don't want to say it, but, you know, there are all kinds of reasons why people marry. And similar doings and talks are indulged in by competing grocers or saloon keepers or neighboring farmers or fellow employers and fellow students and not infrequently by children of the same family.

Give us this day our daily bread. There must be a reason why God wants to give us only so much at a time, as we need for just one day. He wants us to rely on His providence, day in, day out. We must make reasonable efforts to provide for the future, but not with such over-great anxiety as though God were to die tomorrow and could not help us any longer. God never dies and Providence never ceases. He saw the poverty of Ruth, the Moabite, and disposed the heart of Booz so that he allowed her to glean the

fields after his reapers had passed over them. Jesus saw the loving confidence of the crowds that had followed Him into the desert, and He rewarded them by multiplying the five loaves and two fishes and fed them all, five thousand in number.

It might seem sufficient to say, Give us bread today, but the Lord added that "our", and there is a good reason for that also. He wants to encourage us to ask Him with confidence for what we as His children can rightfully claim, as long as we behave as such. We may ask for "our" bread, but not for that which is not ours.

And then comes the little word "daily." How old are you? Let me suppose you are just twenty years old, that would be more than 7000 days. Now, is there one day among these 7000, on which you did not get anything to eat? Most likely you take three meals a day, and that would mean over twenty thousand meals in your life. Of course, you take this as something that naturally

belongs to you and you are right in a way, but do not forget that there have been times when kings and emperors would have given their crown and all to have just one meal as you take for dinner. Millions of people have died of hunger in the long famines in India and China, and thousands still die every year when the crops do not fulfil their early promises. So this little word "daily" is another admonition addressed to rich and poor, to all that say the Lord's Prayer, to be thankful for every good gift of God. And yet how many Christians fail to say any such prayer before and after their meals or at the beginning and end of day! It is considered "fashionable" not to pray, and if that is true, the hogs and cows have been fashionable from the beginning of the world, for they never pray either.

Let us daily pray for our daily bread and thank the good Lord for it every day and heed the many lessons contained in this petition. If they were heeded by all, rich and poor, the majority of the grave social prob-

lems of today would be solved. The wealthy would consider themselves only as stewards, who have to give a strict account of the possessions which God has entrusted to their administration, and the poor would be more contented with their lot, and both would live in peace and strive together for the acquisition of those treasures which neither rust nor moths can spoil. Amen.





Mary Magdalen Anointing the Feet of Jesus

Forgive Us Our Trespases as We Forgive Them That Tresspass Against Us

MY dear young friends:—Life is not the highest of all boons, but the greatest of all evils is sin. From the first sin, committed by angels in the vestibule of heaven, and the first sin perpetrated on earth in the Garden of Eden by our first parents, down to the last sinful act of the last of men, before the final cataclysm, sin is the ever-productive cause of misery. To write the history of sin means to write the history of pain. The trail of the serpent is plainly visible everywhere. The first touch and sting of sin is inflicted on our souls in that old stain which we inherit as children of Adam, doomed through him and with him. Thus born in sin and inclined to evil from childhood it is small wonder that a

train of personal sins marks and mars the path of our lives. If we could fully realize the hideousness of sin, we should be frightened and be more careful to avoid it. Sin is the one great obstacle to happiness, to peace of soul, to eternal salvation. Mortal sin destroys God's likeness in our soul, makes it impossible for us to do anything meritorious as long as we remain in it, and if we die in it, we are doomed forever. Venial sin is a minor transgression of God's law. It does not take away from us the priceless gift of sanctifying grace, but it diminishes the intimacy of our friendship with God and prepares the way for mortal sins.

In the fifth petition of the Our Father we ask for the forgiveness of our sins, our trespasses, and the remission of the punishment due to every sin. A mortal sin cannot be directly forgiven by the recitation of the Our Father. For that an act of perfect contrition or confession is required, but venial sins may be directly forgiven by a penitent recital of



Esau Forgiving His Brother

the Lord's prayer. Also temporal punishment may at least in part be remitted by the saying of the Our Father, because prayer belongs to the works of satisfaction and because we ask for it in the words of Christ Himself.

Every one, even the just, may in truth pray for the forgiveness of sins, either their own or those of others. All may safely profess themselves as sinners and rightly fear that not all their transgressions are forgiven by God.

He is willing to forgive all, even the most disgraceful and the most heinous crimes, but He has laid down one condition, and that is, we must come to Him in a truly penitent spirit, which makes us willing to forgive others that may have sinned against us. The willingness with which we forgive others is the condition and also the measure of our own forgiveness. We formally ask God not to forgive us if we refuse to pardon others.

Jacob had robbed his brother Esau of the right of primogeniture and his father's blessing, and the consequence was bitter hatred between the two brothers. After long years of estrangement the two brothers met. Esau approached the tents of Jacob with a large army. Jacob feared for his life and his property, but the meeting was peaceful, Esau forgiving his deceitful younger brother.

Christ proved the special friend of sinners all through His earthly career and He has not lost His love for them since He returned to His Father. He cured the diseased bodies of all that came to Him with their ailments, but His chief concern were the ailing souls of sinners. Perhaps the most remarkable instance of a great public sinner who received forgiveness from His divine lips was Mary Magdalen. The story is touching and illuminating to a high degree. It teaches that no sinner, no matter how far he may have strayed from the path of righteousness, need despair. That much is forgiven those who love

much. She washed the Savior's feet with her tears of repentance, she anointed them with precious ointment, she dried them with her hair, and the Lord, in His divine kindness, pardoned her all and made her one of His favorite disciples, whose name will be mentioned with honor wherever the Gospel is read.

There is a spirit of mercy pervading the Gospel, which is most consoling. We need God's mercy, for we all are sinners. Let us often repeat the Our Father and particularly this petition, for sin, we must remember, is the greatest of all evils. Amen.





"Begone, Satan!"

And Lead Us not into Temptation

MY dear young friends:—To say that life is a warfare, is not telling you anything new. Even the youngest of you have been engaged in this war since they came to the age of reason. It is a war that ends only with death, and the effects of victory or defeat in this lifelong war will be visible long after death. This continual struggle is necessary to secure for us a brilliant crown in heaven. To live means to fight, and there is no way of escaping it.

It is the will of God that we all should be drawn into this conflict, but it is consoling to know that He will not permit us to be tempted more than we can stand. A temptation may be defined as anything and everything that urges us to go against our conscience.

The three enemies with which we have to battle are, according to the Scriptures, the world, the flesh, and the devil. By "world" in the scriptural sense we understand all the evil influences around us. By the "flesh," all the wicked inclinations within us, and by "devil," the host of malignant spirits below us.

The causes of all sins may be grouped under three main headings: excessive love of worldly goods, excessive love of pleasure, excessive love of honors. The Creator instilled into our nature a desire for the acquisition of property. He endowed our nature with a longing and capacity for the enjoyment of pleasures concomitant with the exercise of the various senses. He also implanted into our soul a tendency to seek greatness, distinction, and honor. All that God ever made is good. It is only the excess of this threefold craving that constitutes the sins of avarice, luxury, and pride, and these are the sins in which all others have their root.

Dante, the immortal poet of the "Divine Comedy," in the first canto of his inferno describes how in the midway of his life he found himself astray in a gloomy forest. Three wild beasts obstructed his path. The first was a panther, nimble, light, and covered with a speckled skin, which tried to check his onward going. Then a lion came in view, with his head held aloft, and hunger-mad. Even the air was fear-struck. And close at his heels came a she-wolf, who in her leanness seemed full of ravenous desires and plainly showed that she had embittered many a life. The sight appalled him and in fear he slowly retraced his steps. The speckle-skinned panther was the symbol of luxury, the lion the symbol of pride, the she-wolf the symbol of avarice and envy. These are the beasts that beset every man's life path.

When the sons of Israel dwelled in the land of Egypt they saw the worship of the native gods. Their pagan neighbors urged them to honor the sacred bull and its image,

and many yielded to the instigation, because it brought them material advantages. The worship of the golden calf seems never to have completely died out among them.

Christ became like unto us in all things except sin. He even allowed the devil to tempt Him. Of course, the Savior could not be tempted internally, I mean, He could not for one moment feel an attraction to anything sinful. Nevertheless His conduct during Satan's attempt is instructive. When we study the whole event closely, we find that the threefold temptation refers to the three categories outlined before.

After fasting for forty days, naturally, the Lord was exhausted, and He felt hungry. Satan approached Him and said: "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." The Lord answered: "It is written: 'Not in bread alone doth man live but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God.' " The devil tempts the Lord to satisfy His hunger, a perfectly lawful pleas-



The Israelites in Egypt

ure, but the Lord declines to work a miracle, for there are other ways to sustain His life.

Seeing the Lord's trust in God, the tempter tries to lead Him into presumption. He takes Him up into the holy city and sets Him upon the pinnacle of the temple and says to Him: "If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down, for it is written: 'That He hath given His angels charge over Thee, and in their hands shall they bear Thee up, lest Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.' " Jesus answers: "It is written again: 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' "

Christ would have had glory and fame with all the people if He had thrown Himself down from the temple without injury. He declined. Again the devil took Him up to a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them and said: "All this will I give, if falling down, Thou wilt adore me." Then Jesus said: "Begone, Satan, for it is written: 'The Lord thy God thou shalt adore, and Him only shalt thou serve.' "

Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto Jesus. The last temptation was one of greed, or avarice, including perhaps a temptation to the two first kinds of sin.

Let us mark well the quiet decision with which the Lord repels the advance of the enemy. There is no parleying of any kind but a blank refusal.

As the angels came to Christ after Satan had left Him, so they will come to us when the tempter is gone, and will console and rejoice us by the peace that comes with them.

Since excessive love of pleasure and gold and honor are the roots of all sins, religious take a threefold vow, by which to counteract this threefold tendency.

Let us always remember that temptations are not sent us to defeat us, but to give us an opportunity of victory, of reward. Alone we are feeble and easily overcome, with Christ and His grace we are strong enough to stand all temptations of life. For this grace we ask in

this petition of the Our Father. It is well often to repeat this petition and then bravely and patiently bear the onslaught of the three-fold enemy of our soul. Amen.





Jesus Calls Jairus' Daughter Back to Life

But Deliver Us from Evil

MY dear young friends: — There is nothing more pathetic than the picture of Christ praying in agonized fear on Mount Olivet, that the Father take away from Him the chalice of suffering which He was about to drain. Christ was human, and His heart shrunk with horror from the superhuman pains that were threatening Him. His soul was buried in gloom; He felt too weak to brave the oncoming storm of suffering and His blood trickled to the ground on which He knelt when He uttered that fearful, though resigned, petition to His Heavenly Father.

Bodily pains, famines, wars, floods, accidents, persecutions, loss of wealth and honor, deaths, all these are evils, and following the example of our Lord, we may pray to be delivered from them.

Agar had been driven out of Abraham's tent and with Ismael, her son, hungry and weary, roamed through the wilderness of Bersabee. Soon the water in the bottle was spent and she laid the child under one of the trees. She would not see him die and went off as far as a bow can carry and sitting over against she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard her voice and an angel came and said: Fear not, Agar, arise, take up the boy and hold him by the hand for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water and went and filled the bottle and gave the boy to drink.

When Jairus mourned over the death of his youthful daughter, the kind-hearted Savior asked by the heart-broken father, restored her to life. When a mother's only son was carried out of Naim to be buried, He halted the bearers and called the dead back to life.

Lazarus had been in the grave for four days. The Lord loved him and his sisters Mary and Martha, and he, too, was called back to life.



Agar and Jismael

He cleansed many lepers, cured the lame and the blind and all manner of bodily infirmities, when requested by those so afflicted.

God often listens to the prayers of His children, the petitions of a grieved mother, or the cry of a nation in distress, but not always, and the reason is, because none of these things that we dread so much is an absolute evil. Suffering, which to the philosophers of old was an insoluble mystery, through Christ's suffering has become a remedy, a source of blessing and happiness: "Blessed are those that mourn, that suffer persecution." "Who does not take his cross upon himself and follow Me, is not worthy of Me." Long sickness and severe losses often bring a soul living in worldliness to a realization of its dangers. Suffering becomes a school of virtue and leads to God. Pains borne with patience and willingness are the touchstone of a truly Christian spirit and an excellent means to do penance for our sins.

We cannot flee all crosses, no matter where we go. Life and suffering are insepar-

able. To live in the midst of such as do not harmonize with our character, to stand the frequent changes of the weather, to bear the unavoidable trials, temptations, humiliations of life, all these things must be considered as essential ingredients of our earthly career.

And are we not often, too, a burden to ourselves? That also must be endured.

We may pray like the Savior: "Lord, if it be possible, let this chalice pass away from me," but should also add: "Not my will be done but Thine." And God will take away the evil or give us patience and strength. If, from all that I have said, it is plain that all temporal evils are only conditional evils, what, then, is the real evil, for the removal of which we chiefly pray in this last petition of the Our Father?

The only real evil in the world is sin and all that leads to it or springs from it.

We pray to be freed from the effects and remnants of former sins.

We beg to be delivered from present sins.

We implore God's help against future sins, for we know, that without His special aid we shall succumb to temptation and perish.

It is not enough that we should make a good start in combatting our bad habits, in doing penance, but we must persevere in the struggle.

We must try to form a correct idea of the meaning and purpose of all temporal evils, and we shall be more afraid of sin as the one great evil in the world.

Let us often repeat this last petition of the Lord's Prayer. It sums up in four words all the previous petitions, but refers in a special manner to sin, which is the root and cause of all unhappiness for individuals and nations. Amen.



A Life's Amen

“Amen”

MY dear young friends:—Ten times we have meditated on the Lord's Prayer. You have read with attention all that I have tried to say to show its meaning and its beauty. We have come to the end. My soul is in a mood that could be called solemn, almost sad. I feel how poor and inadequate are all endeavors to explain and elucidate the words of a prayer formulated by the Savior of mankind Himself. It is so simple and direct that any explanation would seem superfluous, so deep and sublime that even the most learned of men will never be able to exhaust its treasures. The inevitable conclusion from this is: let us say it as often as possible, say it with attention and devotion, and He that taught us to say it, will give us a fuller understanding of it, as we grow in His love and grace.

Still, since I undertook to explain this wonderful prayer, I must finish my task. Only one more word is to be explained, that strange little word, with which we nearly always close our prayers, the word Amen. It is derived from the Hebrew and means: so be it.

From times immemorial the Church has concluded her prayers with this word. During Mass the choir or the server representing the congregation answers the Amen to all the orations sung or said by the priest, thus joining him in his supplications. The Amen is like a seal put on our prayers, like a final effort to emphasize our petitions, to repeat once more all that we have said.

On Mount Olivet, near the place where according to tradition, the Lord taught the apostles the Our Father, stands the beautiful Pater Noster Church, built in commemoration of this occurrence. In the arcades of the convent to which the church belongs, the Our Father is inscribed on 32 stone tablets in 32

languages. The sublimity and universality of this prayer deserve such a monument, but deeper than in these tablets, the Our Father should be inscribed in the hearts of all Christians.

It is the official prayer of the Church, which begins and ends nearly all the important functions of the priest, but also the most common prayer of the faithful, who by its recitation profess their faith, acknowledge God's mercy and their own poverty and sinfulness.

The Our Father is the first prayer that the priest and our sponsors say in our name at Baptism. It will also be the last prayer said at our deathbed. How many Our Fathers lie between these two days! Some said in deep distress of soul, some in wants of the body, and many, perhaps, said carelessly. God listened to all, and we hope, in mercy, pardoned all our frailties, willing to receive us into His own home, heaven, to sing forever that grand Amen to all that He has done.

Now, we say the Our Father, uttering one petition after the other, and adding Amen to each one, at least mentally. Hallowed be Thy name: Amen; Thy kingdom come: Amen; Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven: Amen; Give us this day our daily bread: Amen; And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us: Amen; And lead us not into temptation: Amen; But deliver us from evil: Amen.

God Himself will speak a great Amen at the end of time. Amen to all His loving plans for our welfare, Amen to all His plans for His own glory. And He will let His faithful children join in gratitude and bliss.
Amen.





The Angel's Grand Amen

A Lost Chord

BY ADELAIDE A. PROCTER

Seated one day at the Organ,
 I was weary and ill at ease,
And my fingers wandered idly
 Over the noisy keys
I know not what I was playing,
 Or what I was dreaming then;
But I struck one chord of music,
 Like the sound of a great Amen.
It flooded the crimson twilight,
 Like the close of an Angel's Psalm
And it lay on my fevered spirit
 With a touch of infinite calm.
It quieted pain and sorrow,
 Like love overcoming strife;
It seemed the harmonious echo
 From our discordant life.

It linked all perplexéd meanings
 Into one perfect peace,
And trembled away into silence
 As if it were loth to cease.

I have sought, but I seek it vainly,
 That one lost chord divine,
Which came from the soul of the Organ
 And entered into mine.

It may be that Death's bright angel
 Will speak in that chord again,
It may be that only in Heaven
 I shall hear that grand Amen.



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